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ABSTRACT

A study sought to find out how many skills which women learn through life experience can be transferred to selected postsecondary vocational education programs. Methodology included mailing sixteen sets of nine questionnaires to women in women's centers, displaced homemaker centers, and counseling centers in seven states. Questionnaires covered the type and extent of adult women's involvement in homemaking and parenting activities, volunteer work and community service, recreation and hobbies, formal and nonformal education, and paid work, and self-ratings on twenty-eight occupationally transferable skills. Questionnaires also were sent to nine junior college vocational educators to identify the importance of skills for selecting students for vocational programs and for awarding advanced placement in nine program areas. Finally, the women's self-ratings and the vocational educators' ratings were compared to identify the skill areas with the greatest transferability for each program. It was concluded that self-ratings of adult women's life experience skills and learning have potential for use in counseling and placing women in postsecondary vocational education programs. Six tables show items rated for advanced placement or exemption from courses. A transferability analysis, based on the women's self-ratings and the vocational educators' ratings, is also included. (KC)

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IDENTIFYING THE RELEVANCE OF WOMEN'S LIFE EXPERIENCE LEARNING TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

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Credentialing Women's Life Experiences
(Project ACCESS)

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Identifying the Relevance of Women's Life Experience Learning to Vocational Education Programs

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Adult women are, today, the fastest growing group of students in postsecondary education institutions. Many of these women, who have typically spent several years as homemakers, seek vocational education to prepare themselves to enter the job market; however, they often face problems in obtaining appropriate vocational education. Eliason (1977), in a study of access to occupational education for women in community and junior colleges, found that: (1) women are tracked into "dull, dead-end, and poorly paying" clerical, allied health, or retail sales jobs; (2) instructors, deans, and counselors need in-service training in attracting and keeping competent women students in non-traditional occupational curricula; and (3) admissions, guidance, and testing policies fail to provide "one step service" and rarely include providing credit for life experience learning.

Because much of women's life experience learning has not taken place under the sponsorship and supervision of faculty or employers, there are special problems in determining its relevance to postsecondary vocational education programs. According to Ekstrom and Eliason (1978), there are four barriers to the acceptance of women's life experience

learning: (1) Identification--the woman herself, or the vocational educator, may not recognize that an activity has been a learning experience in which new skills and knowledge were acquired; (2) Articulation--women and vocational educators may not be able to recognize or demonstrate the relationship between a skill, acquired through experiential learning, and a job; (3) Assessment--even when vocational educators agree that life experience learning has resulted in job-relevant skills, formal recognition of these skills may not occur because of problems in assessing and credentialing life experiences; and (4) Beliefs--some vocational educators feel that acceptance of life experience learning will result in lower standards for students and will mean the admission of individuals unable to perform well in the program.

To deal with these problems, the Bureau of Occupational and Adult Education, U.S. Office of Education, awarded a research contract for a project that would further the recognition and credentialing of women's life experience learning in postsecondary vocational education programs and in employment.

The purpose of the study described here was to obtain an indication of the transferability of skills, acquired through life experience learning, to selected vocational education programs.

A questionnaire was developed covering the type and extent of adult women's involvement in homemaking and parenting activities, volunteer work and community service, recreation and hobbies, formal and nonformal education, and paid work, and self-ratings on specific skills. These included 28 occupationally transferable skills, among which were those

most frequently listed in the Dictionary of occupational titles qualification profiles of worker trait groups (as adapted from Table 5 of Sjogren, 1977). Alternate forms of the questionnaire were developed so that the same set of items would not be administered to more than nine women.

Sixteen sets of nine questionnaires were mailed to women's centers, displaced homemaker centers, and counseling centers in seven states, and were completed by women who were taking part in the programs of these centers. A total of 131 usable replies were received, a response rate of 91%. The results (Ekstrom, Beier, Davis, & Gruenberg, in press) showed that adult women do, indeed, have a wide variety of life experiences through which they acquire skills relevant to vocational education. Although the most commonly found skills among re-entry women are those that are utilized chiefly in clerical and secretarial work, retail trade, manufacturing, and service occupations, many women also have skills relevant for nontraditional occupations. For example, approximately one-half of the women in this survey had done home construction projects and/or had made electrical and plumbling repairs; 40% had made automobile repairs; and more than 80% had done painting and wall papering. These findings suggest that many adult women may have already learned some skills taught in vocational education.

Vocational educator questionnaires, to identify the importance of certain skills in selecting students for vocational education programs and for awarding advanced placement in these programs, were prepared for each of nine program areas: cook/chef, computer programming, drafting,

library technology, lithography, medical records technology, occupational therapy, respiratory therapy, and welding. The questionnaires were based on vocational education curriculum descriptions and outlines obtained by the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges from selected programs, and on the skills and experiences identified in the women's questionnaire.

Each questionnaire listed the skills, personal characteristics, and prior experiences that appeared relevant for each vocational education program. These questionnaires were mailed to nine vocational educators identified by the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges as teaching in the specified program areas. The educators were asked to rate each item twice: (1) for selecting students to be enrolled in the program, using the scale 3 = found only in superior students, 2 = necessary for average course performance, 1 = minimum necessary to pass course, and 0 = not relevant; and (2) for awarding advanced placement or course exemption to students, using the scale 3 = very important in identifying these students, 2 = valuable in identifying these students, 1 = little help in identifying these students, and 0 = not relevant.

Finally, the women's self-ratings and the vocational educator ratings were compared to identify the skill areas with the greatest transferability for each program. The results reported here deal only with cook/chef, drafting, library technology, medical records technology, occupational therapy, and respiratory therapy; there were insufficient responses from the other program areas for meaningful analysis.

Results

Several of the vocational educators reported that the selection ratings were of minimal importance, since their program's philosophy was to accept all applicants and provide them with the educational experience necessary to reach the criteria required to pass each course. It is not surprising, then, that relatively few of the items received the high ratings that would identify them as important in selecting students. In contrast, many more of the items received high ratings for their utility in determining advanced placement or course exemption. Consequently, it was decided to focus this analysis primarily on the advanced placement rating.

Tables 1 through 6 show the items that were rated 2.5 or higher for advanced placement in or exemption from courses offered during the first two terms of these vocational education programs.

Table 7 shows the transferability analysis, based on the women's self-ratings of the skills they acquired through their life experience learning and the vocational educators' ratings of the importance of these skills in each of the six programs. The skills are listed in order of the mean self-rating by the re-entry women (scale: 3 = I do this very well, 2 = I do this fairly well, 1 = I do not do this well, 0 = I cannot do this at all). Note that all skills were not asked about for all vocational education programs.

Conclusions

It can be concluded that self-ratings of adult women's life experience skills and learning have potential for use in counseling and

placing women in postsecondary vocational education programs. The purpose of the field test (Task B1) is to determine if these self-ratings have practical utility, as well.

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Table 1

Cook/Chef

Items with Highest Ratings for Advanced Placement/Course Exemption
(Ratings of 2.5 or higher)

		Average rating
	EXPERIENCE IN:	
1.	Cooking & baking	2.75
2.	Quantity food preparation	2.75
3.	Catering for small parties	2.50
4.	Paid work as a cook	2.50
	ABILITY TO:	
5.	Produce a quality food product	3.00
6.	Prepare appetizers, canapes, & hors d'oeuvres	3.00
7.	Prepare egg & breakfast dishes	3.00
8.	Prepare garnishes for food	3.00
9.	Prepare potatoes, rice, & pasta	3.00
10.	Prepare salads & salad dressings	3.00
11.	Prepare sandwiches	3.00
12.	Prepare sauces & gravies	3.00
13.	Prepare seafood products	3.00
14.	Prepare vegetables	3.00
15.	Identify & prepare fruit products	3.00
16.	Work with leftover foods	3.00
17.	Recognize menu terminology & use it correctly	3.00
18.	Use the basic tools of bulk food preparation	3.00
19.	Apply safety rules in the use of kitchen equipment	3.00
20.	Meet sanitation & safety requirements in food handling	3.00
21.	Set priorities	3.00

Table 1 (continued)

	ABILITY TO:	Average rating
22.	Work under pressure	3.00
23.	Evaluate the freshness & quality of meat, fish, poultry, fruit, vegetables, and dairy products	2.75
24.	Evaluate prepared food	2.75
25.	Determine the appropriate quantity of food to buy	2.75
26.	Set up work stations for quantity food preparation	2.75
27.	Prepare yeast breads and rolls and sweet goods	2.75
28.	Prepare quick breads	2.75
29.	Prepare buttercakes & icings	2.75
30.	Prepare various kinds of pie crust and pie fillings & assemble them into finished pies	2.75
31.	Prepare cookies	2.75
32.	Prepare desserts, such as custards & mousses	2.75
33.	Prepare various types of soups	2.75
34.	Decorate cakes in simple designs	2.75
35.	Serve attractive & palatable meals	2.75
36.	Select meats suitable for various preparation techniques	2.75
37.	Select, use, & care for kitchen appliances & utensils	2.75
38.	Operate & care for food preparation equipment	2.75
39.	Work with hands quickly & with dexterity	2.75
40.	Identify grades & quality of food	2.50
41.	Do quantity baking or cooking	2.50
42.	Demonstrate the skills & knowledge required of a short order cook	2.50

Table 1 (continued)

		Average rating
	ABILITY TO:	
43.	Prepare non-alcoholic beverages	2.50
44.	Use regional & seasonal foods	2.50
45.	Prevent common food spoilage problems	2.50
46.	Demonstrate first aid procedures for burns, cuts, choking, etc.	2.50
47.	Set up a steam table for use in cafeteria	2.50
48.	Be patient	2.50
49.	Coordinate simultaneous projects	2.50

Table 2

Drafting

Items with Highest Ratings for Advanced Placement/Course Exemption
(Ratings of 2.5 or higher)

		Average rating
	ABILITY TO:	
1.	Make a detailed working drawing	3.00
2.	Make an assembly working drawing	2.75
3.	Analyze a problem	2.75
4.	Sketch objects using orthographic projection	2.75
5.	Visualize what is to be drawn	2.75
6.	Express ideas by drawing	2.75
7.	Follow orders & accept supervision	2.75
8.	Do precise & accurate detailed work	2.75
9.	Identify the typical work flow & methods used in machine shops and/or foundries	2.75
10.	Draw a pie chart from data	2.50
11.	Work neatly and accurately	2.50
12.	Use standard block lettering	2.50
13.	Read a blueprint	2.50
14.	Read mechanical drawings	2.50
15.	Do technical lettering	2.50
16.	Develop flow charts, pert charts, & other visual materials	2.50

Table 3

Library Technician

Items with Highest Ratings for Advanced Placement/Course Exemption

		Average rating
	EXPERIENCE IN:	
1.	Library work	3.00
2.	Serving as public or school library volunteer	2.67
	ABILITY TO:	
3.	Compile information	3.00
4.	Prepare a bibliography on a topic	3.00
5.	Use reference resources	3.00
6.	Deal with people	3.00
7.	Utilize library circulation procedures	3.00
8.	Use the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature	3.00
9.	Obtain & verify factual information	2.67
10.	Gather information by confirming facts & locating background data	2.67
11.	Verify orders for books, periodicals, & non-print materials	2.67
12.	Do accurate detailed work	2.67
13.	Check public records for information	2.67
14.	Assist in the development of bibliographies	2.67
15.	Help with library user service	2.67
16.	Train others to do specific jobs or tasks	2.67
17.	Assist in cataloging new books	2.67
18.	Use basic library tools, such as the card catalogue	2.67
19.	Carry out oral & written instructions	2.67
20.	Prepare library materials for circulation	2.67
21.	File library catalogue cards correctly	2.67
22.	Prepare reports on daily circulation	2.67
23.	Use audio-visual equipment	2.67

Table 3 (continued)

		Average rating
	ABILITY TO:	
24.	Use mounting & laminating equipment	2.67
25.	Assist with circulation of library materials	2.67
26.	Identify & use resources relevant to different cultural, ethnic, & religious heritages	2.67

Table 4

Medical Records Technician

Items with Highest Ratings for Advanced Placement/Course Exemption
(Ratings of 2.5 or higher)

		Average rating
	EXPERIENCE IN:	
1.	Assisting with the maintenance of medical records in a hospital or nursing home	2.83
2.	Keeping accurate records of health care	2.83
3.	Working in a hospital, nursing home, or other medical setting	2.67
	ABILITY TO:	
4.	Do precise & accurate detailed work	2.83
5.	Carry out oral & written instructions of some complexity	2.83
6.	Recognize deficiencies in medical records	2.83
7.	Carry out discharge analysis of medical records	2.83
8.	Describe the types of consent involved in dealing with medical records	2.83
9.	Recognize the ethical responsibilities of medical record technicians	2.83
10.	Respect & observe precautions concerning confidentiality of patient information	2.83
11.	Use a library & reference materials	2.67
12.	Define common medical terms	2.67
13.	Read with understanding & interpret medical consent & release forms	2.67
14.	Use correct medical terminology for common diseases & injuries	2.67
15.	Determine if an individual or agency is authorized to receive medical records	2.67
16.	Take responsibility	2.50
17.	Treat a medical record as a confidential document	2.50

Table 4 (continued)

		Average rating
	ABILITY TO:	
18.	Evaluate a medical record as a legal document	2.50
19.	Follow orders & accept supervision	2.50
20.	Describe the common laws & medical policies governing medical record retention	2.50
21.	Abstract medical information from records	2.50
22.	Retrieve medical information from indexes & registers	2.50
23.	Prepare reports containing factual data	2.50

Table 5

Occupational Therapy

Items with Highest Ratings for Advanced Placement/Course Exemption
(Ratings of 2.5 or higher)

		Average rating
	ABILITY TO:	
1.	Work with the emotionally disturbed	3.00
2.	Work with the physically handicapped	3.00
3.	Work with the physically ill	3.00
4.	Work with the mentally handicapped	3.00
5.	Work with the elderly	3.00
6.	Demonstrate a knowledge of human development	3.00
7.	Understand the physical, emotional, & educational needs of an individual with a physical or emotional handicap	3.00
8.	Help patients develop better ways of coping with the demands of daily life	3.00
9.	Assess patient performance in daily living skills	3.00
10.	Evaluate a patient's vocational & avocational interests in terms of a specific disability	3.00
11.	Use problem solving techniques to adapt activities to the needs of a patient	3.00
12.	Use occupational therapy activities to restore or or develop performance skills	3.00
13.	Encourage the development of self-sufficiency for a patient within the limits of the illness or handicap	3.00
14.	Encourage the development of social skills	3.00
15.	Recognize the nonverbal cues & behaviors that indicate tensions or problems	3.00
16.	Observe a patient for unusual signs	3.00
17.	Provide a safe environment for a patient	3.00
18.	Understand how to transfer & transport patients	3.00

Table 5 (continued)

		Average rating
	ABILITY TO:	
19.	Position a patient to prevent deformities & improve functioning	3.00
20.	Identify & explain basic patient care procedure for diseases & disabilities	3.00
21.	Identify the most common psychiatric disorders	3.00
22.	Understand the general treatment principles for stroke, cerebral palsy, emotional & mental dysfunctions	3.00
23.	Apply knowledge of anatomy & physiology to occupational therapy	3.00
24.	Contribute to the planning of an occupational therapy program	3.00
25.	Establish long & short term therapeutic goals	3.00
26.	Plan & organize cooperative & competitive activities & know when each is appropriate	3.00
27.	Use group process as a therapeutic tool	3.00
28.	Teach an activity or skill to an individual	3.00
29.	Teach an activity or skill to a group	3.00
30.	Analyze a craft in terms of sensory input, specific motions required, & therapeutic aspects	3.00
31.	Write step-by-step procedures for an activity	3.00
32.	Make mosaics	3.00
33.	Write concise, understandable reports	3.00
34.	Make observational records of patients	3.00
35.	Report orally on a patient's condition	3.00
36.	Carry out oral & written instructions & directions	3.00
37.	Obtain & verify routine factual information	3.00
38.	Give proper care & maintenance to occupational therapy equipment	3.00
39.	Use reference material to learn a new craft	2.50

Table 5 (continued)

		Average rating
	ABILITY TO:	
40.	Record & report professional information	2.50
41.	Identify methods of evaluating effectiveness in meeting goals as objectives	2.50
42.	Identify when a change in or termination of therapy is appropriate	2.50
43.	Identify & explain the basic concepts of health care delivery	2.50
44.	Train groups or individuals in preventive or remedial health care	2.50
45.	Encourage the development of "common sense"	2.50
46.	Recognize the common side effects of psychiatric medication	2.50
47.	Provide standard first aid	2.50
48.	Do cardio-pulmonary resuscitation	2.50
49.	Make static splints	2.50
50.	Examine & test the use of prosthetic devices	2.50
51.	Do ceramic work	2.50
52.	Do block printing	2.50
53.	Teach card & board games	2.50
54.	Do basket weaving	2.50
55.	Do needlework (knit, crochet, embroider, etc.)	2.50
56.	Use clay, metal, wood, yarn, & other craft material	2.50
57.	Do copper tooling	2.50
58.	Use art media, such as paints, tempera, pastels, & crayons	2.50
59.	Order supplies & equipment for an activity	2.50
60.	Inventory supplies & equipment	2.50
61.	Operate an occupational therapy area with consideration for safety, organization, & housekeeping	2.50
62.	Follow orders & accept supervision	2.50

Table 5 (continued)

		Average rating
	ABILITY TO:	
63.	Make an effective oral presentation to a group	2.50
64.	Establish rapport with individuals of diverse background	2.50
65.	Show compassion for those with problems	2.50
66.	Relate to patients & staff in a courteous & caring manner	2.50
67.	Determine the urgency of a problem & handle it appropriately	2.50
68.	Respect patients' need for privacy & confidentiality	2.50
69.	Understand professional ethics & responsibilities	2.50
70.	Understand the legal implications of therapy & therapy records	2.50
71.	Manage time & schedule activities	2.50
72.	Use reality orientation	2.50
73.	Use remotivational techniques	2.50

Table 6

Respiratory Therapy

Items with Highest Ratings for Advanced Placement/Course Exemption
(Ratings of 2.5 or higher)

		Average rating
	ABILITY TO:	
1.	Carry out oral & written directions of some complexity	3.00
2.	Perform basic life support functions	3.00
3.	Translate information & facts to a level appropriate for an individual's background & experience	2.67
4.	Show compassion for those with problems	2.67
5.	Deal with people	2.67
6.	Communicate effectively with patients	2.67
7.	Follow orders & accept supervision	2.67
8.	Establish rapport with individuals of diverse backgrounds	2.67
9.	Use common pulmonary terms & symbols	2.67
10.	Describe the anatomy & physiology of the cardiovascular system	2.67
11.	Describe the anatomy & physiology of the respiratory system	2.67
12.	Use aerosol therapy	2.67
13.	Use simple oxygen delivery systems	2.67
14.	Determine the urgency of a problem & handle it appropriately	2.67
15.	Recognize & deal with medical emergencies	2.67
16.	Think & behave rationally when dealing with an emergency	2.67
17.	Care for & maintain the materials & equipment used in respiratory therapy	2.67
18.	Observe safety precautions in using equipment & medicine	2.67

Table 7

Transferability of Women's Life Experience Learning
to Advanced Placement in Selected Vocational Education Programs

ABILITY TO:	Mean self-rating by women	Average Vocational Educator Rating: Cook/Chef	Drafting	Library Technology	Medical Records Technology	Occupational Therapy	Respiratory Therapy
1. Show compassion	2.8	--	--	--	0.83	2.50	2.67
2. Deal with people	2.6	1.50	--	3.00	--	--	2.67
3. Take responsibility	2.6	--	--	--	2.50	--	--
4. Follow orders and accept supervision	2.6	--	2.75	2.33	2.50	2.50	2.67
5. Carry out oral and written directions	2.6	--	--	2.67	2.83	3.00	3.00
6. Evaluate a product/information	2.5	2.75	--	1.67	--	--	--
7. Adjust schedule to a variety of changes	2.5	3.00	--	--	--	--	--
8. Analyze a problem	2.5	--	2.75	--	--	--	--
9. Use oral communication skills	2.4	--	--	--	1.67	3.00	2.67
10. Do precise and accurate detailed work	2.3	--	2.75	2.67	2.83	--	2.33
11. Instruct others	2.3	--	--	2.67	1.50	3.00	--
12. Coordinate an activity	2.3	2.50	--	--	--	--	--

Table 7 (continued)

ABILITY TO:	Mean self-rating by women	Average Vocational Educator Rating: Cook/Chef	Drafting	Library Technology	Medical Records Technology	Occupational Therapy	Respiratory Therapy
13. Compile information	2.3	--	--	3.00	2.17	--	--
14. Do problem solving	2.3	--	--	--	2.17	3.00	2.00
15. Do repetitive work	2.2	--	2.00	2.33	1.83	--	--
16. Work under stress	2.2	3.00	--	--	--	--	2.33
17. Establish rapport	2.2	--	--	--	1.50	2.50	1.83
18. Obtain and verify information	2.2	--	--	2.67	2.17	3.00	--
19. Direct, control, and plan activities	2.1	2.00	--	--	--	--	--
20. Negotiate between people/groups	2.1	--	--	--	1.17	--	--
21. Supervise others	2.1	2.25	--	--	1.50	--	--
22. Use writing skills	2.1	--	--	--	1.67	3.00	--
23. Manage others	1.9	--	--	1.50	2.50	--	--
24. Do computations and arithmetic	1.7	2.50	--	--	--	--	--